

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 MC-02 EB-07 IGA-01

TRSE-00 COME-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /074 W

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R 132141Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9799

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: MASS VE

SUBJ: VENEZUELAN ARMS PURCHASES FROM THE US

1. SPEAKING TO THE PRESS AFTER THE AUGUST 12 VENEZUELAN CABINET MEETING, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, MAJOR GENERAL HOMERO LEAL TORRES, REPORTEDLY SAID THAT VENEZUELA HAS "NEVER BEEN IN AN ARMS RACE." HE ADDED, "WHAT WE ARE DOING IS BUYING THE NECESSARY ARMS FOR OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE." IN SEPARATE COMMENTS TO THE PRESS, FOREIGN MINISTER RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM STATED THAT , "VENEZUELA IS NOT IN AN ARMS RACE, NOR HAS IT EVER BEEN."

2. LEAL AND ESCOVAR WERE RESPONDING TO A RECENT WIRE SERVICE (LATIN) STORY DATED WASHINGTON WHICH REPORTED THAT VENEZUELA WAS THE LEADING LATIN AMERICAN PURCHASER OF US ARMAMENTS. ACCORDING TO THIS PRESS REPORT, VENEZUELA PURCHASED \$33,579,000

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WORTH OF US ARMS AND EQUIPMENT OUT OF A TOTAL OF \$150,000,000 IN

SALES TO SEVEN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN FY-75. THE OTHER SIX COUNTRIES MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT WERE: CHILE (\$28,718,000), BRAZIL (\$25,390,000), PERU (\$23,548,000), ECUADOR (\$14,822,000), ARGENTINA (\$12,933,000), AND URUGUAY (\$7,993,000). THE WIRE SERVICE STORY SAID THAT A DOD SPOKESMAN ADMITTED THAT THE OVERALL FIGURE FOR ARMS SALES TO LATIN AMERICA EXCEEDED PREVIOUS YEARS. THE STORY QUOTED OTHER CIVILIAN SOURCES IN WASHINGTON AS STATING THAT THIS INCREASE WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT CONGRESS HAD EOIMINATED RESTRICTIONS ON THE SALE OF CERTAIN ARMAMENTS TO LATIN AMERICA.

3. IN HIS COMMENTS TO THE PRESS, GENERAL LEAL TORRES SAID THAT THE \$33 MILLION FIGURE WAS SOMEWHAT HIGHER THAN HIS MINISTRY'S CALCUTIONS, BUT HE DID NOT SAY BY HOW MUCH. HE ALSO STATED THAT ABOUT FORTY PERCENT OF THE PURCHASES WERE NOT FOR WEASPONS BUT WERE FOR SUPPORT EQUIPMENT FOR THE ARMED FORCES.

4. COMMENT: LEAL'S COMMENTS CONFORM WITH INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY ON FY-75 VENEZUELAN ARMS PURCHASES FROM THE US. THE GOV DID NOT ACQUIRE ANY MAJOR NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS FROM THE US DURING THIS PERIOD AND CONCENTRATED ON PURCHASES FOR THE REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND GRADUAL MODERNIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES. TO EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE, NEITHER DID THE GOV ACCEPT DELIVERY IN FY 75 OF ANY MAJOR ARMAMENTS SYSTEM FROM A THIRD COUNTRY SOURCE, EXCEPT THREE UK NAVAL PATROL CRAFT. SHLAUDEMAN

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